

HISTORICAL COMMISSION TACKLES BIG SURVEY

If you live in one of our handsome houses built before 1850, you may from time to time see a well-dressed citizen looking intently at it or preparing to snap its picture from the street. If you then inquire what he or she is doing there, the answer will be (we hope!), "My name is Jane or John Doe of X St. and am glad you spoke to me. I am a member of Duxbury's Historical Commission and have a letter of introduction to you which will explain my being here."

On the other hand, your first inkling that your house is being studied, may be a letter from the Commission describing its work, its purposes and asking for your cooperation. It will say that the survey is part of our Commonwealth's inventory of its significant old buildings to give all of us a more complete knowledge of what we have which we cannot afford to lose by neglect. It should permit us better to plan for their preservation and also their use. This survey is a painstaking and lengthy job -- of perhaps 2 years! John or Jane of course, can explain this if you happen to meet before you hear from us.

The story of this effort goes something like this: At a Town Meeting in 1975, it was voted to establish a local Historical Commission, which is to report to the Mass. Commission on matters of historical interest. It was felt that we have an exceptional town and a great many irreplaceable old houses which should be in the National Register of Historical Places to protect them and recognize their historic value. Our commission was duly appointed by our selectmen. After a short and partial survey, required by the procedure for nomination to the Register, we nominated 10 old houses and The First Parish Church.

In due course, 6 houses and the church were accepted for the Register. The houses were originally those of: Gamaliel Bradford Jr., Gershom Bradford, John Alden, Alexander Standish and King Caesar.

At that point, the Commission in Boston said to us, "You have a distinguished town with many eligible house close together in the waterfront area. We wish you would survey and then nominate the whole group as an Historical District for inclusion in the Register, rather than nominate them singly." To this we agreed, so we dropped the last 4 of the original nominations and are proceeding with the survey for the District.

The District, we have defined as the area "between the flagpoles" along Washington St and from the waterfront on the East to the South branch of the Bluefish River on the West. This includes the sites of several shipyards and wharves which were important to the early town, as well as a great concentration of buildings of historical and architectural interest.

More information will appear in future Clipper's. Watch for it.

Frederick Potter